

REMARKS

Applicant expresses appreciation to the Examiner for consideration of the subject patent application. This amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed October 26, 2005. Claims 5, 6, 9, 22, and 23 were indicated as allowable. Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 10-13, 18-21, and 24-29 were rejected. The claims have been amended to address the concerns raised by the Examiner.

Claims 1-4, 7-21, and 24-29 remain in the application. Claims 1-29 were originally presented. Claims 5, 6, 22 and 23 have been canceled without prejudice. Claims 1, 18, 25, 27 and 29 have been amended and are fully supported by the specification. Claims 14-17 were previously withdrawn, but are now allowable as depending from an allowable generic claim. Support for the claim amendments is clearly found in the original claims, the specification, and in the figures.

The indication of allowable subject matter in claims 5, 6, 9, 22 and 23, if rewritten in independent form, is acknowledged with appreciation.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of allowable claim 5 and is allowable, as are dependent claims 2-4 and 7-13. Accordingly, claim 5 has been cancelled without prejudice. Claim 6 has been cancelled to eliminate redundancy between claims 1, 4 and 6, and not for reasons of patentability.

Independent claim 18 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of allowable claim 22, and is allowable, as are dependent claims 19-21, and 24. Accordingly, claim 22 has been cancelled without prejudice. Claim 23 has been cancelled to eliminate redundancy between claims 18, 22 and 23, and not for reasons of patentability.

Independent claim 25 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of allowable claims 5 and 22, and is allowable, as are dependent claims 26-28. Claim 27 has been amended to eliminate redundancy between amended claim 25 and original claim 27, and not for reasons of patentability.

Independent claim 29 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of allowable claim 9. Therefore, independent claim 29 is allowable.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 10-12, 18-21, and 24-29 (including independent claims 1, 18, 25 and 29) were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sato (JP 08156351).

As described above, the independent claims have been amended to include allowable subject matter.

Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 1, 18, 25 and 29 are allowable, and respectfully urges the Examiner to withdraw the rejection. Dependent claims 2-4, 7-13, 19-21, and 24-28 are allowable for at least their dependence on an allowable independent claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 12 and 13 (including independent claim 1) were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Madsen et al (US Patent No. 6,209,857) in view of Sato.

As noted above, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 5, and is, therefore, allowable. Applicant submits that dependent claims 12 and 13 are allowable for at least their dependence on an allowable base claim.

Therefore, Applicant respectfully urges the Examiner to withdraw the rejection.

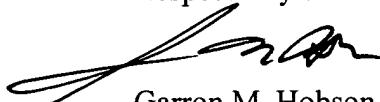
CONCLUSION

In light of the above, Applicant respectfully submits that pending claims 1-4, 7-21, and 24-29 are now in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicant requests that the rejections and objections be withdrawn, and that the claims be allowed and passed to issue. If any impediment to the allowance of these claims remains after entry of this Amendment, the Examiner is strongly encouraged to call Robert D. Wasson at (360) 212-2338 so that such matters may be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee or to credit any overpayment in connection with this Amendment to Deposit Account No. 08-2025.

DATED this 23rd day of January, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,



Garron M. Hobson
Registration No. 41,073

THORPE NORTH & WESTERN, LLP
Customer No. 20,551
P.O. Box 1219
Sandy, Utah 84091-1219
Telephone: (801) 566-6633

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